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PROGRAMME, THE ENVIRONMENT FUND AND ADMINISTRATIVE AND OTHER BUDGETARY MATTERS

Status report on the establishment of a regional seas programme for the East Central Pacific region

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

The present report, prepared in pursuance of Governing Council decision 19/14 E, describes progress made to date in facilitating the establishment of a regional seas programme for the East Central Pacific region.

Suggested action by the Governing Council

The Governing Council may wish to:

Endorse the action taken thus far in facilitating the establishment of a regional seas programme for the East Central Pacific region, including endorsement by the Governments involved of the draft action plan and corresponding legal instrument;

Invite the Governments concerned to continue to negotiate a convention and plan of action for the protection of the marine and coastal environment of the East Central Pacific region;

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* UNEP/GC.20/1.

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Request the Executive Director to continue to provide support for the negotiation of the action plan and corresponding legal instrument for the East Central Pacific region.

A. Progress achieved since the nineteenth session of the Governing Council

1. Preparation of a draft action plan and supporting legal instrument for a regional seas programme for the East Central Pacific region was initiated in early 1998. These documents also incorporate linkages with the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities. First drafts of the action plan and legal instrument were completed by March 1998.

2. A consultative mission to the capitals of the States concerned was undertaken in March and April 1998. Consultations were held with high-level representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, for the purpose of discussing the two drafts. These talks served as a basis for additional consultations to discuss the possible participation of Mexico, the United States of America and Canada in the proposed regional seas programme.

3. Favourable responses to the proposals for a regional seas programme and corresponding legal instrument were received in April 1998 from the Governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama. The Government of Mexico has also responded to the proposal. The Governments of the United States and Canada provided initial comments on the draft action plan and legal instrument during the March 1998 mission; a final decision regarding their participation in the East Central Pacific regional seas programme is awaited.

4. Second drafts of the proposed action plan and legal instrument, incorporating the views and comments of the Governments expressed during the various consultations, are being prepared, and will be finalized by early 1999.

B. Planned future action

5. Once the second drafts of the action plan and legal instrument have been finalized, UNEP will consult with the Governments concerned about the venue and dates for a Meeting of High-level Government-designated Experts to Review the Proposal for a Convention and Plan of Action for the Protection of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the East Central Pacific region. The Government of Panama has offered to host this meeting, which is expected to be held during the first half of 1999.

6. When implementation of the regional seas programme for the East Central Pacific region begins, the Coordination Office for the Global Programme of Action will support activities to related to implementation of the Plan in the region, in cooperation with the Governments concerned.